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Contact: Deborah Lopez
Illinois DCFS
312-937-0050

Illinois DCFS Launches Enhanced, Streamlined Online System for Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect

Updated System Also Optimized for Mobile Phones

(CHICAGO) – The Department of Children and Family Services enhanced and streamlined its online reporting system and optimized its website for easier submissions through mobile phones to make reporting allegations of neglect and abuse even easier for the public and mandated reporters.

The updated site has improved entry fields, clearer instructions and fewer necessary clicks, reducing the time required to make reports and providing a convenient alternative to calling the 24-hour hotline.

“Our user-friendly online reporting system makes it easier for everyone to file a report of suspected abuse or neglect, including those whose only access to the internet may be through a smartphone and prefer to file a report through the site,” said Illinois DCFS Acting Director Marc D. Smith. “The earlier suspected abuse or neglect is reported, the earlier we can connect the family to services and supports they need to keep their children safely at home.”

During the early months of the coronavirus pandemic while families were secluded at home, children were less likely to be seen by other adults, including mandated reporters such as teachers. Less than 50% of reports of suspected child abuse and neglect were reported in April 2020 compared to April 2019.

Now that schools welcomed students back either in person or virtually, that trend is reversing. Reports to DCFS have increased, with September 2020 remaining about 18% below 2019.

“We know teachers are one of the main groups of individuals who make reports to our hotline because they spend so much time with children every day; and now that schools are back in session, a teacher may be the first person outside of a child’s immediate family to see him or her in quite some time,” said Smith.

Online reports through the enhanced site have quickly increased since its launch, with 434 online reports in the last full week of September compared to 173 filed during the same time in 2019.

The new online reporting system also places reports directly into DCFS's case management system, which increases internal efficiency. At the same time, the new system is expected to reduce the number of overall calls, requiring fewer return calls at a later time from DCFS staff during high-call volume periods.

The decrease in reports did not result in a decrease in investigations, as the number of investigations actually increased compared to the prior year.

To make a report of suspected child abuse or neglect online in a non-emergency situation, visit <https://dcfsonlinereporting.dcf illinois.gov/>. To make a report by phone, call 1-800-25-ABUSE (800-252-2873). Calls and online reports may be made 24 hours a day, seven days a week. For all emergency situations, calls should be made to 911.

***About the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS)** Founded in 1964, DCFS is responsible for protecting children from abuse or neglect by responding to calls received on the Child Abuse Hotline, 1-800-25-ABUSE (1-800-252-2873). With the goal of keeping children safe, DCFS strengthens and supports families with a wide range of services. When keeping a child safe means removing them from the home, DCFS makes every effort to reunite them with their family. When the best interest of the child makes this impossible, DCFS is committed to pursuing adoption by loving families to provide children with a safe and permanent home. DCFS is also responsible for licensing and monitoring of all Illinois child welfare agencies.*

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